

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT  
EASTERN DISTRICT OF MISSOURI  
EASTERN DIVISION

VIOLET MARIE WILLIAMS, )  
                              )  
Plaintiff,                )  
                              )  
v.                         )      No. 4:09CV01745 ERW  
                              )  
CLAYTON POLICE DEPARTMENT, )  
et al.,                    )  
                              )  
Defendants.              )

**MEMORANDUM AND ORDER**

This matter is before the Court upon the application of Violet Marie Williams for leave to commence this action without payment of the required filing fee. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a). Upon consideration of the financial information provided with the completed application, the Court finds that plaintiff is financially unable to pay any portion of the filing fee. Therefore, plaintiff will be granted leave to proceed in forma pauperis pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a).

**28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)**

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court may dismiss a complaint filed in forma pauperis at any time if the action is frivolous, malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or seeks monetary relief against a defendant who is immune from such relief. An action is frivolous if "it lacks an arguable basis either in law or in fact." *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319, 325 (1989). An action fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted if it does not plead "enough facts to state a claim to relief that is plausible on its face." *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 127 S. Ct. 1955, 1974 (2007).

In reviewing a pro se complaint under § 1915(e)(2)(B), the Court must give the complaint the benefit of a liberal construction. *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972). The Court must also weigh all factual allegations in favor of the plaintiff, unless the facts alleged are clearly baseless. *Denton v. Hernandez*, 504 U.S. 25, 32 (1992); *Scheuer v. Rhodes*, 416 U.S. 232, 236 (1974).

### **The complaint**

Plaintiff seeks monetary and injunctive relief in this action against defendants Clayton Police Department and Officers Unknown Musgrave and Unknown Middleton. Plaintiff alleges that defendants Musgrave and Middleton were called to the scene as she was attempting to go into a Clayton restaurant to get something to eat. She claims that the officers acted "quite stupidly & inappropriately" by asking her questions and ultimately taking her to the Metropolitan Psychiatric Center, where she "had to endure cruel, harsh, [and] unusual treatment that was not necessary."

Although plaintiff has failed to state the jurisdictional grounds for filing this action in Federal Court, the Court will liberally construe the complaint as having been brought under 42 U.S.C. § 1983.<sup>1</sup>

### **Discussion**

Having carefully reviewed plaintiff's allegations, the Court concludes that the complaint is legally frivolous as to the Clayton Police Department, because police departments are not suable entities under § 1983. *See Ketchum v. City of West Memphis, Ark.*, 974 F.2d 81, 82 (8th

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<sup>1</sup>To the extent that plaintiff is attempting to bring this action under 28 U.S.C. § 1332, subject matter jurisdiction does not exist, because complete diversity of citizenship is lacking. See 28 U.S.C. § 1332.

Cir. 1992); *see also De La Garza v. Kandiyohi County Jail*, 2001 WL 987542, at \*1 (8th Cir. 2001) (sheriff's departments and police departments are not usually considered legal entities subject to suit under § 1983).

As to defendants Musgrave and Middleton, the Court notes that plaintiff is suing them in their official capacities. *See Egerdahl v. Hibbing Community College*, 72 F.3d 615, 619 (8th Cir. 1995)(where a complaint is silent about defendant's capacity, Court must interpret the complaint as including official-capacity claims); *Nix v. Norman*, 879 F.2d 429, 431 (8th Cir. 1989). Naming a government official in his or her official capacity is the equivalent of naming the government entity that employs the official. *Will v. Michigan Dep't of State Police*, 491 U.S. 58, 71 (1989). To state a claim against a municipality or a government official in his or her official capacity, a plaintiff must allege that a policy or custom of the government entity is responsible for the alleged constitutional violation. *Monell v. Dep't of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658, 690-91 (1978). The instant complaint does not contain any allegations that a policy or custom of a government entity was responsible for the alleged violations of plaintiff's constitutional rights. As a result, the complaint is legally frivolous and fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted.

Accordingly,

**IT IS HEREBY ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion for leave to proceed in forma pauperis [Doc. #2] is **GRANTED**.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that plaintiff's motion for appointment of counsel [Doc. #4] is **DENIED**, as moot.

**IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that the Clerk shall not issue process or cause process to issue upon the complaint, because the complaint is legally frivolous and fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B).

A separate Order of Dismissal shall accompany this Memorandum and Order.

So Ordered this 5th Day of November, 2009.



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E. RICHARD WEBBER  
UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE